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AUTHOR Small, Sue E.
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ABSTRACT

Research evidence clearly indicates the need to improve the school administrator's effectiveness as a key factor in educational reform. One difficulty is balancing administrators' wants with organizational needs. Inservice education planners' examination of these wants and needs led to the client-based needs assessment process described in this paper. Used in the Baltimore (Maryland) Public Schools, the process aimed to determine the perceived and desired knowledge of specific effectiveness indicators and to discover preferred presentation methods for designing the staff development program. The study addressed school clients' wants and needs when designing leadership training objectives for elementary school administrators. The process was approached through three phases: study and implementation design, development diversification, and data collection and analysis. This led to a fourth phase: program design and development. Findings showed that current administrators and administrative interns viewed their levels of knowledge differently. Perceived knowledge seemed affected by role more often in topics related to instructional leadership and management than in those related to human relations. Furthermore, school administrators and other key groups identified content needs differently. Administrators' high-priority wants varied from the needs identified by the superintendents' staff and others. All client groups agreed on the seminar/workshop model as most desirable. The idea behind Baltinmore County's collaborative model is balancing needs and wants so that mutual, maximum benefit is gained by individuals and the school system. (MLH)

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# A CLIENT-BASED NEEDS ASSESSMENT: A MODEL FOR DEFINING STAFF DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES FOR SCHOOL-BASED ADMINISTRATORS

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Sue E. Small, Ed.D.
Specialist, Staff Development
Baltimore County Public Schools
Towson, MD 21204

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# A CLIENT-BASED NEEDS ASSESSMENT: A MODEL FOR DEFINING STAFF DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES FOR SCHOOL-BASED ADMINISTRATORS

The recent close scrutiny and critique of public education has precipitated a concerted effort on the part of public school systems to address staff development needs to effect reform. The research evidence clearly points to the need for improving the leadership effectiveness of the school administrator as a key factor in school reform.

The need for staff development for school administrators is given additional support by their general expression of dissatisfaction with pre-service preparation and inservice programs they have experienced. While the need for additional training is apparent, practicing administrators are hesitant to pursue "more of the same".

The scenario goes something like this: the administrators are selected and are on the job. They experience situations for which they have not developed a full repertoire of knowledge and skills on which to base a course of action. As a result of this state of affairs, administrators translate these discrepancies in preparation and performance requirements into inservice needs or WANTS.

At the same time the organization has expectations which stem from certain philosophies, perceptions and advocacies which are translated into staff development NEEDS for school administrators.

When the organization communicates its' expectations to the administrators, a somewhat revised set of WANTS develops, but their WANTS still may not be the same as the organization's NEEDS.

Consequently, to realize the goals of school effectiveness we must ferret out the essential needs of the school administrators, both real and perceived, articulate the real needs of the organization and build a balanced staff development program on these systematically assessed needs.

Those involved in planning inservice education and delivering it to school-based administrators are compelled to examine both the WANTS and NEEDS for administrator leadership development programs. It was that examination which formed the study discussed briefly here.

A client-based needs assessment process was used in the Baltimore County Public Schools, the twenty-second largest school system in the United States, to determine the perceived knowledge and desired knowledge of specified indicators of effectiveness and the preferred methods of presentation for designing the staff development program for elementaryschool-based administrators. The questions asked in the study centered around the: (1) existence of perceived differences of current knowledge and desired knowledge of specific indicators of effectiveness or the WANTS of the administrators themselves; (2) content NEEDS identified by the Superintendent's staff, central office instructional staff and teachers for administrator staff development programs; and (3) models of presentation identified as best meeting each content need.

Implications were drawn from the data analysis about existing policies and procedures, about refining currently existing staff development programs, and about goal statements for the staff development of school-based administrators in the school system.

The study addressed both the WANTS and NEEDS of clients in the school system to define leadership training objectives for school-based administrators. The process was approached through three phases: study and instrumentation design, development and verification; data collection and data analysis. These led to a fourth phase, program design and development.

**Phase I: Study and Instrument Design.** Two instruments were developed, a survey tool and an interview schedule. Topics for staff development program content were derived from the recent literature on school and principal effectiveness (See Tables 1, 2, and 3.) The interview schedule was designed from survey results and its purpose was to clarify objectives and expand content desired by client groups.

The survey instrument was developed and validated by a panel of experts who reviewed it for content validity, comprehensiveness, clarity of directions, use of terms and ease of response. The instrument was structured to focus on school level effectiveness factors so topics were organized as addressing process and organizational structure characteristics. The instrument was field tested and then distributed.

The interview schedule was used following the analysis of the survey results with purposes of determining attitudes toward

Table 1

INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS' BEHAVIORS FOUND IN THE LITERATURE

Instructional Leadership Category

| Topic | Recent Professional Literature Support |
|---|---|
| Developing school goals for student achievement | Austin; Persell & Cookson; Cawelti; McIntyre; Venezky & Winfield |
| Managing time for focus on instructional matters | Austin; Blumberg & Greenfield; Bossert et al.; Cawelti; Cohen & Manasse; Greenfield; Leithwood & Montgomery; Persell & Cookson |
| Monitoring, analyzing, and reporting student achievement | Cawelti; Leithwood & Montgomery; Mackenzie; McIntyre; Persell & Cookson; Venezky & Winfield |
| Motiving staff support for implementing school objectives | Austin; Cawelti; Mackenzie; McIntyre; Roe & Drake |
| Obtaining community support for school objectives | Austin; Bossert et al.; Greenfield; McIntyre; Roe & Drake |
| Setting performance objectives with teachers | Austin; Bossert et al.; Leithwood & Montgomery; McIntyre; Roe & Drake |
| Evaluating curriculum implementation | Austin; Bossert et al.; Cawelti; Cohen & Manasse; Greenfield; Hall; McIntyre; Roe & Drake |
| Evaluating instructional programs | Austin; Bossert et al.; Cawelti, Cohen & Manasse; Greenfield; Hall; McIntyre; Roe & Drake |
| Introducing curriculum development processes in the school | Austin; Bossert et al.; Cawelti; Cohen & Manasse; Greenfield; Leithwood & Montgomery; Mackenzie; McIntyre; Venezky & Winfield |
| Planning, organizing, conducting, and evaluating staff development/ inservice training for teachers | Cawelti; Greenfield; Leithwood & Montgomery; Mackenzie; McIntyre; Persell & Cookson; Roe & Drake |
| Providing learning theory instruction and how to apply in classrooms | Hille, Mackenzie |
| Providing teaching techniques and how to apply in classrooms | Greenfield; Hille; Leithwood & Montgomery; Wood, Thompson & Russell |

Table 2

INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS' BEHAVIORS FOUND IN THE LITERATURE

Management Category

| Topic | Recent Professional Literature Support |
|---|---|
| Analyzing problems/using problem analysis techniques | Blumberg & Greenfield; Cawelti; Mills; Pitner; Persell & Cookson |
| Assessing administrative leadership behaviors/using information for learning and growth | Cawelti |
| Assessing teachers' leadership behaviors/using information for their learning and growth | Austin; McIntyre |
| Conducting personnel evaluations in the appraisal process | Cawelti; Olivero; McIntyre |
| Maintaining a safe, orderly learning environment for students | Bossert et al.; Mackenzie; McIntyre; Persell & Cookson |
| Using planning and forecasting techniques | Abbott; Blumberg & Greenfield; Cawelti; Cohen & Manasse; Greenfield; Leithwood & Montgomery |
| Administering school operations and initiating needed changes | McIntyre |
| Interpreting school law and master agreement contracts in the school | Cawelti |
| Inventorying, securing, and distributing needed services, materials, equipment, supplies | McIntyre; Roe & Drake |
| Maintaining a student record and reporting system | McIntyre; Roe & Drake |
| Managing school finances and accounting procedures | Cawelti; Roe & Drake |
| Organizing and scheduling to optimize conditions for learning | Bossert et al.; Leithwood & Montgomery; Mackenzie; McIntyre; Roe & Drake; Venezky & Winfield |



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Table 3

INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS' BEHAVIORS FOUND IN THE LITERATURE AS POSSIBLE GUIDES

Human Relations Category

| Topic | Recent Professional Literature Support |
|---|---|
| Establishing a climate for risk-taking and innovation | Blumberg & Greenfield; Boseart et al.; Cohen & Manasse; Leithwood & Montgomery; Olivero; Persell & Cookson; Pitner |
| Facilitating personnel interaction to complete specific projects or achieve objectives | Olivero; McIntyre |
| Identifying, managing and resolving conflicts | Abbott; Blumberg & Greenfield; Cavelti; Cohen & Manasse; Greenfield; Pitner |
| Interacting with personnel in goal setting and decision-making | Blumberg & Greenfield; Cohen & Manasse; Leithwood & Montgomery; Mackenzie; McIntyre; Olivero; Persell & Cookson |
| Raising awareness of equity issues | Donbo & Rose |
| Using group process skills | Abbott; Mills |
| Establishing school-business partnerships to secure non-instructional services and support | McIntyre |
| Involving parents and community members in school activities | McIntyre; Roe & Drake |
| Obtaining feedback on teacher morale and teacher satisfaction | Abbott; Cavelti |
| Obtaining feedback on school climate/recognizing academic success | Abbott; Austin; Cavelti |
| Using oral communications effectively and efficiently | Cavelti; Olivero; Pitner |
| Writing clear reports and communications to central office, staff, community | McIntyre; Pitner |

current staff development programs, clarifying objectives and content desired, verifying models of presentation desired and identifying projected future needs.

**Phase II: Data Collection.** The collection of data included surveying the clients and the environments to determine the perceived knowledge and desired knowledge of specific indicators of effectiveness by the administrators themselves and potential administrators, the content needs perceived by others within the organization, and the preferred methods of presentation. The instrument was distributed to those within the Baltimore County Public Schools who are involved in the business of schooling... principals, assistant principals, potential administrators, the Superintendent's staff, central office instructional staff, and teachers. Of 400 surveys distributed, 372 were returned, a rate of 93 percent. (See Table 4.)

Data were collected not only from the survey instrument, but through analysis of the primary documents and scheduled interviews. Review and inclusion of primary documents was an ongoing part of the client based needs assessment process. Documents reviewed included, but were not limited to, the policies and regulations of the Board of Education of Baltimore County, the operating budget, selection processes and standards, job descriptions, and evaluation standards for school administrators.

Interviews were held with members of all client groups with the exception of teachers. Those interviewed were selected randomly within categories of position and experience.

Table 4

Participating Groups in Baltimore County Public Schools Needs Assessment for Administrator Staff Development

| Personnel | Total | Number Surveyed | Percent Surveyed | Number Returned | Percent Returned |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Elementary School Principals | 100 | 100 | 100% | 94 | 94% |
| Elementary Assistant Principals | 99 | 99 | 100% | 93 | 94% |
| Potential Administrators: Phase III Pool | 39 | 39 | 100% | 37 | 95% |
| Elementary Teachers | 2,025 | 102 | 5% | 96 | 94% |
| Superintendent's Staff | 16 | 16 | 100% | 16 | 100% |
| Central Office Instructional Staff/ Elementary | 44 | 44 | 100% | 36 | 70% |

**Phase III: Data Analysis.** Analysis of the data included both statistical tests and review by experts. Survey data were tested using the chi square statistical test establishing significance at the .05 level. Interview findings and document reviews were analyzed independently by both the researcher and other selected experts.

Findings were reported to clients (See Figure 1). In general, it was found that current administrators and potential administrators (those serving administrative internships) viewed their levels of knowledge differently, thereby also identifying their WANTS for staff development differently. In addition, when administrators feel they already know about a topic, they do not express a need to know more about it. Also, perceived knowledge seemed to be affected by role more often in topics related to instructional leadership and management than in human relations.

Further, it was found that school-based administrators and other key groups identify content NEEDS differently. Specifically, the content identified for administrator staff development as categorized in three functional categories showed that the administrators' most often selected WANTS varied from the NEEDS identified by the Superintendent's staff and others within the organization as shown in Figure 1.

All client groups surveyed about the preferred models of presentation for each staff development topic agreed on the seminar/workshop model as the most desirable. Listed in descending order by frequency of selection as a preferred method, the models of delivery are:

## Figure 1

TOPICS RANKED BY PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSE AS PERCEIVED TO BE THOSE WHICH ELEMENTARY ADMINISTRATORS SHOULD KNOW MORE ABOUT

Top Three Choices Of Each Respondent Group:

| 94 Principals** | 93 Assistant Principals** | 37 Potential Administrators** | 16 Superintendent's Staff | 36 Central Office Personnel | 96 Elementary Teachers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Topics in Instructional Leadership Category*** | | | | | |
| Learning Theory<br>Time Management<br>Staff Development | Learning Theory<br>Time Management<br>Staff Development | Teachers' Goals<br>Evaluating Programs<br>Curriculum Develop. | School Goals<br>Time Management<br>Teachers' Goals | School Goals<br>Motivating Staff<br>Eval. Programs/ Teaching Techs. | Motivating Staff<br>Evaluating Programs<br>School Goals |
| **Topics in Management Category*** | | | | | |
| Problem Analysis<br>Planning/Forecasting<br>Leadership Behaviors | School Finances<br>Planning/Forecasting<br>Master Agreement | School Finances<br>Appraisal Process<br>Problem Analysis/ School Operations | School Organ.<br>Appraisal Process<br>School Operations | School Organ.<br>School Operations<br>Appraisal Process | School Organ.<br>School Operations<br>Safe Schools |
| **Topics in Human Relations Category*** | | | | | |
| School-Business Partnerships<br>Innovative Climate<br>Equity | School-Business Partnerships<br>Innovative Climate<br>Equity | School-Business Partnerships<br>Equity<br>Innovative Climate/ Conflict Resol. | Parent Involvement<br>Cooperative Goal Setting<br>Feedback/Climate | Feedback/Climate<br>Cooperative Goal Setting<br>Innovative Climate/ Climate Feedback<br>Effective Oral Communications | Feedback/Morale & Satisfaction<br>Effective Oral Communications<br>Cooperative Goal Setting |

*Refer to the survey instrument in the appendix for a full statement of the topics.

**Topics not listed by the respondent group may be perceived as already known.

1. Seminar/Workshop
2. In-School Staff Development
3. Collaboration of School System and Universities
4. Collegial Role Counseling/Coaching
5. Self-Directed Study
6. University Courses

Interview findings, however, were inconsistent with the survey results in that both actual or anticipated attendance at seminar/workshops were reported to be hindered by the need to be "in the school." Feeling this constraint, those interviewed expressed a predisposition to self-directed study by asking other people, reading about topics they want to learn about or taking university courses.

These findings, and others not reported here, were synthesized to draw conclusions and implications as related to the research questions addressed in the study. A summary of the conclusions and implications for the Baltimore County Public Schools is presented in Figure 2.

**Phase IV: Program Design and Development.** The implications of the client-based needs assessment are far-reaching for the development of a master plan for administrator staff development in the Baltimore County Public Schools. Yet it also has implications for the refinement of current programs. Some of these have been addressed to respond in realistic time frames and to produce visible outcomes. Leadership training programs have

Figure 2

A CLIENT-BASED NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL-BASED ADMINISTRATORS IN THE BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Summary of Major Conclusions and Implications

| Research Question | Conclusions | Implications |
|---|---|---|
| RESEARCH QUESTION ONE<br><br>Are there differences in perceptions regarding current knowledge and desired knowledge of indicators of effective instructional leadership, management and human relations among elementary school-based administrators and potential administrators in Baltimore County Public Schools? | There are inter-group, role-related differences in perceptions of current knowledge and desired knowledge in categories of instructional leadership and management.<br><br>Role did not seem to affect perceptions of respondents regarding knowledge in the human relations category.<br><br>Principals generally feel they are knowledgeable about the indicators of effectiveness in categories of instructional leadership, management and human relations; however, for topics they don't feel they know, they desire to know more. | Differentiated, prescribed role-related staff development programs need to be available for various respondent groups in instructional leadership and management categories.<br><br>Staff development programs in human relations should be prescribed and available for combined groups of current and potential administrators.<br><br>Staff development programs need to present state-of-the-art of knowledge to current administrators and provide both organizational structures and processes which will motivate the administrators to participate in the staff development programs. |
| RESEARCH QUESTION TWO<br><br>What do the Superintendent's staff, central office instructional staff and teachers in the Baltimore County Public Schools perceive to be the most desired content for staff development programs for elementary school-based administrators? | There are inter-group differences between the perceptions of the Superintendent's staff, central office instructional staff and elementary teachers regarding the most desired content for administrator staff development programs, however, more agreement was found in management than in the other two categories.<br><br>Inter-group, role-related significant differences were found between each key respondent group, including the potential administrators, and the current administrators regarding desired content for administrator staff development programs. Most differences were found in the management category. Principals feel they are already knowledgeable while others believe they need to know more.<br><br>Of the four key groups - Superintendent's staff, central office instructional staff, teachers and potential administrators, the potential administrators perceived desired content more similarly to the current administrators than any other group.<br><br>While differences in perceived content needs are the dominant conclusions, similarities were also found to exist. Seven topics were perceived similarly by all respondent groups and six of these addressed process characteristics. | Collaboratively-decided, procedural definitions of role expectations and and related staff development expectations are needed to relate programs to intended outcomes.<br><br>Both organizational structures and processes need to be clarified, to demonstrate commitment, and to initiate a long-range systematic staff development plan focusing on both content desired by the administrators themselves and processes to renew individuals through collaborative appraisal.<br><br>Existing leadership programs for potential administrators should continue to the degree it is desired that the perceptions of those involved are more similar to current administrators.<br><br>Content in current administrator staff development seminars should include the process topics identified by the administrators as desired knowledge and agreed upon by the other respondent groups. |
| RESEARCH QUESTION THREE<br><br>What models of presentation are identified by elementary administrators, potential elementary administrators and other key groups in Baltimore County Public Schools as best meeting the desired content needs through staff development programs? | Feelings regarding preferred models were divergent. Seminar/workshop model in the formally-structured group was most often identified on the questionnaire; and the informally-structured model of in-school staff development was the second most often preferred on the survey.<br><br>It has been concluded that both formally and informally-structured models are desired and used.<br><br>Further, it has been concluded that a variety of models of presentation best meet desired content needs. | Continue to offer the seminar/workshop model of presentation in combination with a variety of other models to present staff development programs, especially the in-school model for application of knowledge and the self-directed study for individual professional growth activities. Incentives to support both formally-structured seminar/workshop models and the self-initiated study by individuals should be increased. Additional resources and monies need to be made available for in-school staff development. |

| Research Question | Conclusions | Implications |
|---|---|---|
| **Research Question Four**<br><br>What are the implications of the findings for: (a) existing Baltimore County Board of Education policies and procedures; (b) refining existing school leadership development programs for elementary school-based administrators and potential elementary administrators in Baltimore County Public Schools; and (c) developing goal statements for staff development programs for elementary school-based administrators in the Baltimore County Public Schools? | Existing policies and procedures provide philosophical bases for the professional growth and staff development of administrators. There are expectations for selection to the positions in the policy manuals and expectations for growth in evaluation standards and operating budget; however, they are not comprehensive. Three major features of a comprehensive staff development program are missing: 1) inclusion of the relationship of staff development programs to intended outcomes; 2) renewed focus on individual personal and professional growth; and 3) realignment of some existing structures to assure attainment of organization development goals.<br><br>Budget allocations are meager and provide few direct incentives for participation in staff development activities of either system-sponsored or self-directed models.<br><br>The existing leadership development programs for current administrators incorporates the seminar/workshop model which was found to be the most preferred delivery system on the questionnaire.<br><br>The leadership program for potential administrators appeared to affect the perceptions of those involved to be more similar to current administrators regarding desired staff development content than any other key respondent group.<br><br>Potential administrators desired to know more about management topics addressing organizational structure characteristics; these management topics were perceived as already acquired knowledge by the principals.<br><br>Goal statements for staff development are implicit in the existing policies, evaluation standards and program objectives in the operating budget. Further, one of the major goals for the next five years is to improve staff development programs. However, policies and programs currently are not comprehensive nor do they explicitly state participation guidelines. | **Relationship of Programs to Intended Outcomes** - Policy and regulation statements to further define and prescribe organizational expectations for the staff development of administrators are needed. These statements should include scope, sequence and guidelines for participation in staff development and professional activities. Collaborative organizational structures need to be established to show commitment to this relationship and to processes which will incorporate changes over time. Both individual growth and organization development need to be related to intended outcomes.<br><br>**Renewed Focus on Individual Growth** - Increased incentives need to be identified and appropriated for both organization development and individual growth.<br><br>Diverse alternative models of presentation need to be available and increased incentives for participation need to respond to system and individual needs.<br><br>The content of leadership programs should be reviewed to include additional emphasis on management topics. Further, the principals should be enlisted to instruct in the leadership program and be provided with incentives to do so.<br><br>The appraisal process needs to be reassessed to provide the link between staff development purposes and intended goals for individuals.<br><br>**Realignment and Creation of Organizational Structures** - Existing organizational structures realigned with the exemplary goal of a broader perspective and improved staff development within collaborative structures are needed to provide for the long-term, process orientation involving key groups and current administrators so that new norms are developed.<br><br>Recognized, desired incentives need to be available both for staff development designers and for administrators and other key groups. Incentives should include financial, time, and interactive dimensions.<br><br>The new structures should include more competencies and options for programs identified and outlined by participants as desired content for their staff development programs. |



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been refined both for beginning principals and experienced administrators. In addition assessment of administrative behaviors is being pursued for principals and assistant principals.

Programs for beginning principals have been refined to emphasize the instructional leadership role and to identify outcomes related to school reform. To the end of school improvement, programs for beginning principals in their first and second years have been designed, developed and implemented through a collaborative effort with the Maryland State Department of Education and institutions of higher education in the North Central Region of Maryland. The Beginning Principals' Institutes I and II have been modeled after the Maryland Professional Development Academy and include summer residential components as well as on-going, systematic follow up sessions and collegial role counseling/coaching elements. Topics identified through the client-based needs assessment which address both WANTS and NEEDS have been included. Categories and topics included are:

BEGINNING PRINCIPALS' INSTITUTE I

| Categories | Topics |
|---|---|
| Instructional Leadership | Learning Theory |
| | Staff Development for Teachers |
| | Developing Goals |
| Management | Analyzing Problems/Using |
| | Problem Analysis Techniques |

| | |
|---|---|
| Human Relations | Establishing Climate of Innovation |

BEGINNING PRINCIPALS' INSTITUTE II

| | |
|---|---|
| Instructional Leadership | Staff Development for Teachers |
| | Managing Time for Instruction |
| | Setting Performance Objectives With Teachers |
| Management | Conducting Personnel Evaluations |
| Human Relations | Assessing School Climate |

The seminar/workshops available for experienced principals have been expanded to include seminars on problem analysis and an extended third year program includes assessing administrative behaviors and using the results for growth. In addition the appraisal process and incentives for employees are being re-examined.

While a client-based needs assessment process has been described here as useful in defining staff development objectives for school-based administrators, the same process has been envisioned as a model for the design and development of a

comprehensive staff development program in the Baltimore County Public Schools. The reiterative process suggests flow of action to:

Design Study and Instrumentation

Examine Processes and Structures

Survey Clients and Environments

Clarify Findings and Confirm

Identify Objectives and Expand Topics

Develop Content and Delivery

Conduct Pilot Seminars/Programs

Assess and Refine... Continuously and Collaboratively

One of the limitations of needs assessments such as this one is in the selection of topics and the possible lack of projection for future needs. Careful study of the environments and the research literature encompassed in a reiterative planning model will be necessary to maintain balance between the WANTS and NEEDS and to keep the process dynamic and focused on school reform.

In summary, the client-based needs assessment process assumes a collaborative search for school reform through leadership development of school-based administrators. Systematic, on-going staff development programs will be characterized by balance between the WANTS of the school administrators and the NEEDS of the organization so that mutual, maximum benefit is gained both by individuals and the school system through school improvement outcomes.